

**Awarding Ceremony of the
Call for Ideas and Award Competition
Active Young Citizens for Sustainable Development in CEI and All Areas**

*19 May 2021 - 10.00 – 11.00 a.m.
Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation*

Excellencies, guests and colleagues,

I am delighted to be here today at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, for the awarding ceremony of the “Call for Ideas and Award Competition - Active Young Citizens for Sustainable Development in Central European Initiative - CEI - and Adriatic Ionian Initiative -All Areas” and to talk about a subject that, I believe, is at the heart of development: the role of youth in shaping the future.

In 2015, world leaders came together at the United Nations to define a common vision of progress for humankind.

They agreed to the Sustainable Development Goals – or SDGs.

They are the most ambitious global agenda ever seen, aimed – among other objectives – at ending poverty, reducing inequality and protecting the planet by 2030.

These 17 goals (such as no poverty, zero hunger, affordable and clean energy) define the global priorities for people and the planet for the next 10 years. At the heart of the SDGs are the three pillars of development: economic, social and environmental.

Any change, starts with an individual action and is shaped by our daily behaviour. This includes choices about the way we live, behave, produce, consume and invest. Our decisions today can contribute to having enough clean water, better air, healthier lifestyle so that ultimately we all live longer and productive lives.

Everyone can make a difference, especially young students who will be called to be the leaders of tomorrow.

Such actions may be small on their own: but when hundreds or thousands or millions of you act together, they can have a huge impact.

Through daily responsible actions, effective engagement in the SDG agenda, and by becoming an advocate among friends, family, neighbours and communities, young people are already contributing to the SDGs.

The active engagement of youth in sustainable development efforts is central to achieving sustainable, inclusive and stable societies by the target date, and to averting the worst threats and challenges including the impacts of climate change, unemployment, poverty, gender inequality and conflicts.

Investing in young people and education is therefore the most important investment and forward-looking investment any government can make.

Investing in youth is investing in our common future, and the returns we might be able to obtain are incredibly high.

The COVID-19 crisis laid bare underlying social and economic vulnerabilities that have hindered efforts to contain and overcome the pandemic. That is why it is imperative to renew our focus on the UN SDGs as countries seek to recover from COVID-19 and we need all of us to commit towards common objectives: the youth must take on responsibilities about their own future, whereas adult generations must empower their children.

As stated in the UN and SDGs – A Handbook for Youth, “youth are not just beneficiaries of this process – they are essential actors in achieving these Goals. Both young women and men have enormous ability to make change not only for themselves, but also for their societies and the rest of the world. [...] As young leaders of tomorrow, it is pivotal that youth are informed and engaged with the global vision for the future. [...] youth will not only directly experience the outcome of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and plans but will also be the key driver for their successful implementation”.

Therefore, I have been glad and pleased to read many interesting and concrete project ideas that clearly show how many schools in our areas have elaborated community-based ideas promoting and understanding the principles of UN Agenda 2030 and its SDGs.

The importance of this joint programme has also been recognized by the ten All / EUSAIR Participating countries, reflected in the Izola Declaration adopted just last week by the Ministers of Foreign Affairs.

The All has strongly worked on the topic of youth and education in the last couple of years, starting with the Ministerial Conference on strengthening the regional and Adriatic-Ionian cross cooperation in the field of youth held under Montenegrin Chairmanship in 2019, and followed by several excellent Round Tables under Serbian and Slovenian Chairmanship.

Along this path, the All and its Permanent Secretariat will grant 5 two-year scholarships to students coming from All participating countries to attend classes at the Università Politecnica delle Marche, starting from September 2021.

Moreover, the All will finance a university course (at the Università Politecnica delle Marche) on issues relating to European integration and the economic-political development of the countries involved in the All and EUSAIR Strategy.

In addition, together with the Forum of the Adriatic and Ionian Chambers of Commerce and UniAdrion – the network of the Adriatic Ionian Universities, we are developing an internship programme to give the chance to university students to spend a period abroad in one of our participating countries to develop the necessary skills to enter the labour market.

All of this is intended to consolidate and increasingly develop that spirit of collaboration and friendship between the countries of the Adriatic-Ionian basin which is at the basis of the "Ancona Declaration".

The issue of young generations and youth empowerment will be further exploited during the Albanian Chairmanship of the Initiative, which will come into effect starting from June 1st of this year.

The Albanian Presidency has already announced how youth will be one of the core topic of their annual Chairmanship. I am particularly glad to see that this item will feature high in the agenda.

To conclude let me sincerely thank Secretary General Antonione and all the CEI staff that with their experience in project management and development has successfully led this process.

Once again, this call for proposals proves the strong long-standing partnership between our two regional organizations, contributing to fostering regional cooperation and sustainable development.

Let me also thank the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs for having organized this ceremony and for the enduring support to the activities of the Permanent Secretariat.

Thank you.

**Second Place Award: Announcement and motivation by All Secretary General,
Gianni Castellaneta**

The second place award goes to **Gimnazija Pula, Croatia** for the proposal “**PLASTIC SCHOLASTIC: towards better education and innovation on environmental sustainability**”.

The proposal intends to use plastic waste deposited on maritime areas with plastic recycling machines together with 3D printing and moulding technology with the self-produced recycled filament, and they will present their products to the local community by organizing events and exhibitions but also to a wider audience by filming a documentary and publishing their progress on the social media.

The work programme includes several educational and study activities on the impact of plastic waste on maritime environment, as well as mapping and picking of plastic waste. Collected plastics will be sorted by type, cleaned, shredded, melted, and spooled producing a 3D printer filament. The production phase will involve building-up of iron models to be injected with melted plastics and creation of 3D printed objects using self-produced recycled filament. The design and utilisation phase will be done in cooperation with the community to produce the most suitable objects for all.

The project was welcomed for the combination of educational aspects with practical cooperation with local actors, resulting in production of objects for the entire community from plastic waste collected. The environmental protection, the recycling activities and the social aspects of benefit for the local community are particularly valuable in this activity.